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Margret Buchmann

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# TEACHING KNOWLEDGE: THE LIGHTS THAT TEACHERS LIVE BY

Margret Buchmann

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Abstract

Although schoolteachers are appointed to a particular office, it is unclear whether much of what they know is special: restricted to official role incumbents and exceptional, or marked off by character, quality, or degree from ordinary knowledge or common sense. The ambiguities of teaching as a career--comparatively low pay and status and little opportunity for advancement--imply that occupational commitment may not be necessary for acquiring teaching knowledge, that the folkways of teaching may suffice. This paper analyzes "teaching knowledge"--the lights teachers live by--to address these issues.

The paper introduces four categories of knowledge: the "folkways of teaching," "local mores," "private views," and "teaching expertise." The folkways of teaching describe "teaching as usual," learned and practiced in the half-conscious way in which people go about their everyday lives. Local mores constitute teaching knowledge held and used like the folkways and mostly based on them, yet local mores are more variable and likely to be articulated as maxims or missions. Teachers' private views are personally compelling, arising from the peculiar experiences, feelings, and characteristics of individuals. What marks off teaching expertise from the folkways, local mores, and private views is less what associated knowledge is about than how it is held and used. Although it can build on the folkways, teaching expertise goes beyond their mastery or skilled performance by including (a) judgments of appropriateness, testing of consequences, and considerations of ends rather than means, and (b) less typical modes of practice, such as explanation, discussion, and the deliberate management of value dilemmas. This paper analyzes, in detail, the "folkways of teaching," arguing that they are known by acquaintance, through participation, and as common sense.

# TEACHING KNOWLEDGE: THE LIGHTS THAT TEACHERS LIVE BY[1]

Margret Buchmann[2]

## Introduction

In all activities and walks of life, people use knowledge. Knowledge is about different things and enables different kinds of action. Knowledge also differs in how widely it is distributed, how it is gained and held, and how it is seen as warranted. Truths can be "identified with names, sentences, propositions, artificial symbols, and their relationships, ideas, representations, concepts, judgments, intuitions, habits, responses to stimuli, and every such class may be variously defended" (Znaniecki, 1965, p. 8). When things are considered a matter of common sense, the question of warrants may not even arise, and even contradictions are taken in stride.

People acquire knowledge through participation in cultural patterns; such participation entitles them to be members of groups and allows them to perform social roles. Some cultural patterns have fewer and more highly selected participants than others. These differences relate to their pervasiveness, the degree to which cultural patterns are diffused through different activities or walks of life. They affect, in turn, the degree to which knowledge is valued by and divided among or dispersed over groups. Although

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[1]Based on a presentation given at the Conference of the International Study Association on Teacher Thinking, "Teacher Thinking and Professional Action," Leuven University, Belgium, October 13-17, 1986.

[2]Margret Buchmann coordinates the Conceptual Analytic Project and is an associate professor of teacher education at Michigan State University. The author wishes to thank David K. Cohen for his encouragement and criticism during the writing process and is also grateful to Lisa A. Jacobson for her assistance in manuscript preparation.

people prize common sense and consider some scarce knowledge ornamental at best, the arcane tends to be valued more highly than widespread knowledge.

How Special Is Teaching Knowledge?

Teaching is a pervasive activity, diffused through all activities and walks of life. Cat-burglars, janitors, radiologists, and flamenco dancers are taught how to do their jobs, mostly by people not trained as teachers. In everyday life, people show each other how to do things, explain procedures or concepts, and respond by praising or correcting the learner in the situation. Families all over the world turn out competent native speakers with a much higher rate of success than teachers with university degrees have in producing readers; ironically, the notion that some people lack communicative competence is an artifact of universal schooling. And every day, millions of children watch their teachers--in American schools, six hours a day, five days a week, for twelve years. The "apprenticeship of observation" (Lortie, 1975) gives them a close-up, extended view of what teachers do.

It follows that teaching knowledge is not considered special and that people are ambivalent about its value. Just as common sense and everyday experience, teaching knowledge is taken for granted: valued, yet seen as a matter of course. Where teaching is concerned, who are the ignorant? If participation in cultural patterns entitles one to role performance, few seem excluded from teaching--perhaps only the demented and flagrantly immoral. When personal biography and everyday experience supply recipes that work, special schooling for teachers need not be arduous or lengthy, nor is it so. What has not been picked up in the school of life will be learned by teaching. The informal occupational socialization of teachers may provide the key to

most of teachers' operating knowledge, accounting for its psychologically subjective but (in both fact and tendency) collective, commonsense nature.

## Does the Ambiguous Status of Teaching Knowledge Matter?

Although schoolteachers are appointed to a particular office, it is unclear whether much of what they know is special: restricted to official role incumbents and exceptional, or marked off by character, quality or degree from ordinary knowledge or common sense. People feel entitled to use their common sense in teaching. This is why I have chosen the term "teaching knowledge," not "teacher knowledge." Speaking of teacher knowledge implies that what is known is special to teachers as a group, but the term "teaching knowledge" allows one to consider knowledge related to the activities of teaching while leaving that question open. This is not to say that ordinary knowledge is not complex or that common sense does not interpret the world. But it does suggest that the knowledge teachers use cannot be placed on either side of the divide between "specialized knowledge which particular individuals need in their occupational roles and common knowledge which all adult individuals need as members of the community" (Znaniecki, 1965, p. 25).

Like the wheel, teaching was invented long ago. The folkways of teaching are an open book and, like the occupation, visible and plain to all. While wheels and the activities of teaching both have many characteristics by nature not the object of sight--for instance, abstract geometrical properties, cognitive goals and outcomes--ordinary people under ordinary circumstances can get things rolling without any clear sense of them. The emphasis on teaching knowledge is therefore no quibble; rather, it is an attempt to be descriptive and to avoid foregone conclusions relating to teacher advocacy and ascriptions

(or denials) of professional status. Although a central and apparently motivating factor in recent discussions of the knowledge teachers use and hold (see, e.g., Diorio, 1982; Elbaz, 1983; Schoen, 1983), these matters are beside the point when trying to understand what lights teachers live by.

For a mass occupation dominated by women, with a flat career, comparatively low pay and status, eased entry and low retention, these ambiguities might be considered a boon, for they imply that occupational commitment--making teaching one's consistent line of work in which one sacrifices time and effort in training and stands to gain due to superior practice (Geer, 1968)--may not be necessary for acquiring teaching knowledge. In fact, these structural features of the occupation may be correlates of its cognitive basis in the folkways of teaching.

Yet most theorists consider these ambiguities as evils and pit their arcane versions of teaching knowledge against the folkways. They invoke expertise where people think that common sense suffices. They look to teachers' private beliefs and images as evidence of teaching knowledge that is special. They often criticize what people learn about teaching through living and working but find little that is redeeming in formal training either. At times, some theorists act as if teaching has not yet been invented.

These theorists are both right and wrong: wrong to disregard or dismiss the folkways of teaching, right to make troublesome inquiries; right to believe that there can be more to teaching than common sense, wrong to assume that the private beliefs of teachers must be held for good reasons. There is something strange about trying to keep people from cooking their meals just because they don't know about vitamins; conversely, it would be foolish to

take given beliefs about what is wholesome as the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

When found to be lacking, what do we substitute for the lights that teachers live by and how do we go about setting teaching in a new light? Being more clear about teaching knowledge, how it is held and used and where it comes from, will help answer that question.

## Categories of Teaching Knowledge

For my analysis, I have selected four categories of teaching knowledge: the "folkways of teaching," "local mores," "private views," and "teaching expertise." Although these categories can be specified and characterized separately, they are not independent. Each category has a different focus: general patterns of usage, local customs, idiosyncratic variation, and reflective--hence critical and on occasion inventive--mastery. Of the four categories, three highlight sources, and one a quality or kind of knowing. More often than not, the folkways, local, and personal teaching knowledge are held as opinion, guesswork, and mere tradition, acquired by habit, false inference, and simple internalization, which turns patterns of action and interpretation into things "no longer easily accessible to reflection, criticism, modification or expulsion" (Schwab, 1976, p. 37).

The folkways of teaching describe "teaching as usual," learned and practiced in the half-conscious way in which people go about their everyday lives, in which they carry themselves fittingly. These folkways are typical and generally work; they have their correlates in the character of school knowledge--that is, in the content and structure of what children learn in school. Local mores constitute teaching knowledge held and used like the

folkways and mostly based on them, yet local mores are more variable and likely to be articulated as maxims or missions. Teachers' private views are like Bacon's (1620/1939) "idols of the cave." Personally compelling, these "idols" arise from the peculiar experiences, feelings, and characteristics of individuals who nevertheless are members of groups; hence even their idiosyncrasy is socially colored and bounded. For these three sources of teaching knowledge, "familiarity, common repute, and congeniality to desire are readily made the measuring rod of truth" (Dewey, 1916/1963, p. 188).

What marks off teaching expertise from the folkways, local mores, and private views is less what associated knowledge is about than how it is held and used. Though it can build on the folkways, teaching expertise goes beyond their mastery or skilled performance by including (a) judgments of appropriateness, testing of consequences, and considerations of ends, not just means; and (b) less typical modes of practice, such as explanation, discussion and the deliberate management of value dilemmas by the teacher. In how they arise and change, local mores and private views have more affinities to the folkways than to teaching expertise. Thus, even though expertise can grow out of local mores and private views, the odds are against it. In itself variable, teaching expertise is the exception by way of character and rare occurrence.

Drawing on research on teaching, teacher thinking and the cultures of teaching (including teacher education) in the United States[3], each of these categories can be examined, determining what each kind of teaching knowledge tends to be about, how it arises and changes, how it is held and used, what it

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[3]From a disciplinary point of view, this body of research includes sociological and anthropological studies, work in cognitive science, and general scholarship in education.

allows teachers to do and see, and how it may relate to the other categories. One can speculate about the ways and the extent to which these different categories of knowledge provide the light that teachers live by. Are they inspirations or means of subsistence? How and why do the folkways of teaching, on the whole, account for the aspects by which teaching is viewed and practiced? To what extent do teachers live by the light of local mores, of what they learn by working in a particular setting? When do teachers rely on their own lights, teaching and seeing teaching with the help afforded by their private views? How bright or dim are these different lights, and how are old lights in teaching changed by new ones, if they change at all? Given this larger context, this paper discusses the folkways of teaching.

## The Folkways of Teaching

Teaching knowledge is first and foremost a matter of usages and social customs. These folkways of teaching are typical. In contrast to the theories of scholars, the folkways are patterns of action and interpretation that exist, are considered right, and are mostly uncodified. Capable of being practiced without understanding their point or efficacy, the folkways are widespread and emblematic, expressing in symbol and action what teaching is about. They are warranted by their existence and taken-for-granted effectiveness. Speaking of the "folkways of teaching" thus involves claims of existence, typicality, rightness, and half-conscious habit. It is here that the knowledge base of teaching lies.

### Folkways: What They Are and How They Develop

Philosophers use the term "naturalist fallacy" to describe the notion that what there is ought to be, yet this notion works quite well in

understanding the development and nature of folkways. To clarify this basic category of teaching knowledge, I rely on William Graham Sumner's (1906/1979) work.

Sumner's argument owes much to Darwin's theory of evolution. In brief, Sumner argues that people first experience need and then respond to need by action, using the method of trial and error. Patterns of action and interpretation arise from recurrent needs, and folkways provide for all the needs of life. The process in which folkways develop consists "in the frequent repetition of petty acts, often by great numbers acting in concert or, at least, acting in the same way when face to face with the same need" (p. 3). Hence folkways are not the product of "purpose and wit"; rather, they develop "unconsciously." People learn folkways by tradition and imitation. Based on the authority of custom and habit, folkways affect every individual within their range.

In changing, folkways are subject to a twofold strain: the strain of improvement, or better adaptation of means to ends, and the strain of consistency with each other, or the requirement of mutual support. The latter is a conservative force; the more conservative, the more a pattern of action and interpretation is central to a cultural system as a whole--its stability and functioning. Gellner (1973) calls such crucial constituents "entrenched clauses," explaining that people can divide their beliefs into two kinds "those which can be denied or replaced without significantly disturbing their total picture and composure, and those which can only be budged at the cost of a wide dislocation and disturbance" (p. 177). Although "entrenched clauses" exist in all systems of thought and action, they are more pervasive in

traditional and folk systems, with the result that the world makes sense and people know where they stand.

In all of this, there is much assent and assertion but little testing and justified belief. Folkways are not even noticed until they have existed a long time, and then mostly by outsiders. In folk patterns of action and interpretation, the "normal"--engrained in the details of social life--requires no explanation (Gellner, 1973). While folkways are due to superstitious learning and other forms of false inference, insiders feel that the folkways are "true" and "right,"

> because they are traditional and exist in fact. . . . The tradition is its own warrant. It is not held subject to verification by experience. The notion of right is in the folkways. It is not outside of them, of independent origin, and brought to them to test them. (Sumner, 1906/1979, p. 28; emphasis added)

When people think or act as it is fitting, this looks good. People often see the suitable as being graceful and harmonious. This is another way in which the folkways are socially reinforced.

Folkways change by the same limited methods by which they arise. Trial-and-error learning is costly and often leads to unfounded conclusions. Unreliable and rough, guesswork can be inspired but remains unsystematic. The strain of consistency controls the pace and direction of change, but compatibility with entrenched clauses cannot guarantee truth and rightness. As Sumner stresses, folkways can become a sound basis for "the science and art of living," but they can also be socially harmful. Yet in learning the folkways people do not simultaneously internalize the disposition to take a hard look at what they do and what the consequences are. Once folkways are appraised, they convert into a different category of knowledge.

Types of Knowing and Acting Consistent With the Folkways

The folkways are known by acquaintance, through participation in everyday life, and as common sense, which caters to people's belief that they are on top of things. Acquaintance and participation breed the familiarity and half-conscious habit that fit with the antitheoretical, populist style of common sense. As "insider knowledge" (Merton, 1973), the folkways command a moral and cognitive loyalty tempered by the fact that common sense leaves room for contradictions (Geertz, 1975; Gellner, 1973).

William James (1830/1950) points out that most languages distinguish "knowledge about" something from the "knowledge of acquaintance." People gain knowledge of the acquaintance type through social interaction and with direct experience of a quality or thing. "Knowledge about" things is acquired by making something the object of thought; it requires detachment and the capacity for coming up with a defensible answer to the question, "How do you know?" For knowledge by acquaintance, the proper answer would be, "I just do":

> I know the color blue when I see it, and the flavor of a pear when I taste it; I know an inch when I move my finger through it; a second of time when I feel it pass; an effort of attention when I make it; a difference between two things when I notice it; but about the inner nature of these facts or what makes them what they are, I can say nothing at all. (James, 1830/1950, p. 221)[4]

Likewise, people "just know" when their spouse has had a bad day or when someone is acting out of line; such knowledge claims stand without justification (Toulmin, 1964).

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[4]The distinction between these two types of knowledge is relative. Most "knowledge by acquaintance" is not "dumb"; some words can be attached to what is present to the mind by way of description or classification. Yet compared with a more complex or analytic account, these words may simply show that one is "to the manner born."

In folkways, knowledge of the acquaintance type concerns patterns of action and interpretation that are no private affair. It is gained through participating in everyday life or in specific patterns of life in institutions. Schutz (1971) describes it as a "knowledge of trustworthy recipes" for interpreting and handling things, people, and occasions. Members of the "in-group" catch the meaning of a situation at a glance and know a way of acting that is fitting. As knowledge, the folkways are rough and ready: not all that coherent, but sufficiently clear to go on. These characteristics are consistent with stylistic features of common sense as a system for action and interpretation. Known as common sense, the folkways do not complicate the complex (a favorite pastime of intellectuals); they soberly affirm the obvious, such as it can be seen by all who can stand on their own two feet:

> There are really no acknowledged specialists in common sense. Everyone thinks he's an expert. . . . There is no esoteric knowledge, no special technique or peculiar giftedness, and little or no specialized training. (Geertz, 1975, p. 24)

The authority of folkways is empirical, that is, based on (mere) experience, not scientific testing or theory. It derives from people's actual participation in them and the likelihood of getting results, for reasons that are unknown or only guessed at. Nor is having a catalogue of means to (given) ends something to be despised; it just doesn't go far enough for responsible action. The folkways are an integral part of personal biography and collective tradition. For ordinary people and situations, acting on them accomplishes what is needed and avoids both fuss and risks. The folkways thus have the practicality of common sense: prudence and astuteness in sizing up persons and situations and in adapting means to (given) ends without much

cogitation. This practicality implies an "objective chance of success" that makes people feel secure and capable. Hence Schutz (1971) concludes that

> it is the function of the cultural pattern to eliminate troublesome inquiries by offering ready-made directions for use, to replace truth hard to attain by comfortable truisms, and to substitute the self-explanatory for the questionable. (p. 95)

Thinking and acting as usual can be maintained as long as life continues, by and large, the same, as long as people experience the same problems for which the same solutions will, on the whole, work. This means that past experience will be sufficient for responding to typical situations and that one can rely on traditions, habits, and recipes without understanding their origins and purposes or (subjectively) testing their adequacy. At the same time, the fittingness of the folkways can lend persons, actions, and occasions an aura of seemliness, propriety, and grace. Under these conditions, people will feel no need to know things analytically, comparatively, or historically; recognizing general types of events and mastering associated patterns of action seems good enough. When acting on plausible, partially clear and coherent knowledge leads somewhere, there is little incentive for brooding.

The types of actions consistent with the folkways accordingly include mastered patterns of action for specific situations that have the rigid but comforting nature of habit and flexible ways of acting for variable situations that require some artfulness to modify steps or sequences in patterns. Schwab (1959) places these types of action in levels one and two of "pragmatic intellectual space," in which an active intelligence of sorts operates, but where there is no knowledge in the honorific sense of authorized conviction. At these levels, intelligence is tied closely to experience (fact and need); it is reactive in orientation and stops short of thinking about consequences,

reasons for the effectiveness of actions, or the comparative merits of ends. These types of thinking and acting dovetail with the style and pretensions of common sense which make probing seem pointless. Still, common sense makes a case that is different at different places and changes over time. Like any other case, it can "be questioned, disputed, affirmed, developed, formalized, contemplated, even taught" (Geertz, 1975, p. 8).

## Teaching As Usual

Applying this analysis to teaching suggests that the folkways of teaching are learned by acquaintance, which yields familiarity without insight, through participation in cultural patterns containing trustworthy recipes, and as common sense, which claims palpable obviousness and sagacity. Neither acquaintance nor testimony, however, imply knowledge about the "inner nature" of teaching, and the very notion is inimical to common sense. This analysis also indicates that, for ordinary circumstances and people, the folkways of teaching will produce some desirable results, and that--although normally taken for granted--they can be tested for their value and validity, and, where appropriate, disputed or developed.

Readiness for giving up folkways should decline the more central a given scheme of action and interpretation is to the cultural pattern of teaching as a whole and the more needs that scheme addresses, with some degree of adequacy. And, if the folkways of teaching are not appreciated for what they do accomplish and how that is done, one would predict that supplements or substitutes will not take hold, for they lack fittingness and practicality. People will "be in for some rude awakenings, the action is conducing toward its own defeat, the project won't float" (Geertz, 1975, p. 20).

Subsisting by means of the folkways of teaching. Despite a large critical literature and reform movements associated with famous figures (such as Dewey and Piaget), people tend to do what they have always done in school. Teachers and textbooks are central to what goes on in school. Thre are whole-class recitations, teachers give lectures, and students do seatwork. Discussions that are not recitations in disguise are rare and, when they happen, they are mostly an outlet for youthful energy and opinion. Westbury (1973) quotes an example in point from a Canadian history lesson:

> "I think Confederation is a good thing."
> "I think it is a bad thing. I'm against it."
> "I'm for it."
> "What good will it do you?"
> "What harm will it do?"
> "No harm. I just don't like it."
> "Well, I do!"
> "Let's have a vote." (pp. 102-103)

Teachers usually spend much more time managing and controlling children than explaining things to them. In conventional classrooms right answers--not reasons--characterize intellectual life, and participants do not usually distinguish between social and epistemic authority (Buchmann, 1984).

Most theorists take a less than placid view of this picture. Yet there are stable facts about teaching and recurrent needs arising in classrooms that lectures and recitations, as the most characteristic classroom patterns, do address in some productive and cohesive fashion. This is precisely the "sheltering" condition under which thinking and acting as usual is maintained. Whereas critics act as if there were a lion in the path of educational change, what we are up against is much tougher: a somewhat adaptive, and adaptable, web of social patterns.

Teaching requires that teachers present what is to be taught, that they give students opportunities to practice what they have learned, and that they

promote students' task engagement, that is, motivate them (Westbury, 1973). (The need to motivate stems from the fact that children's interests in schoolwork will neither be uniform nor unflagging.) Teaching children in the social contexts of schools and classrooms makes executing these tasks more difficult. Moreover, a schoolteacher must also "manage his class, an aggregation of individuals he played no part in recruiting, but who must work together in the interests of task attention and order" (p. 102). Being good at management is an acquired skill, not a virtue; it brings together the "soft," affective and "hard," controlling sides of teaching. But what is special to classroom teaching, as opposed to universal teaching, is not restricted to it: Sergeants and supervisors in factories and offices must also manage the people in their charge.

Now, it is crucial to see that lectures and whole-class recitations (i.e., the rapid-fire, question-answer pattern of instruction) do go <u>some</u> way toward meeting these classroom demands--securing some attention, some control, some coverage, and some form of practice and student learning. Yet the same cannot be said for all things that could and do happen in classrooms. And if handled with skill and judgment,

> the give-and-take of the recitation permits the teacher to focus on the content at hand, and to inject new material or insights into the room while, at the same time, adjusting pacing, humour, and the qualities of his expectations to the needs of the class. Likewise, the lecture permits the teacher to introduce new material, linger over points of difficulty, and tell humorous or interesting stories while he monitors the learning needs of the class. (Westbury, 1973, p. 102)

The learning needs the teacher <u>can</u> see, however, will themselves be determined by the folkways of teaching and their implicit reliance on giving information and getting right answers. At the same time, participating in

classrooms communicates to children just what knowledge is and what they need to learn. Under the rule of the folkways, neither teachers nor students will put inquiry and conceptual understanding at the top of the list of things people need to learn in school. Were these "entrenched" patterns to go, however, the minimal, potentially respectable achievements of the folkways of teaching would also go; at worst, people could experience considerable dislocation.

Replacing the folkways of teaching. As long as classrooms and people remain what they are, patterns of action and interpretation meant to compete with teaching as usual must provide workable, effective (structural and strategic) replacements which give ordinary teachers--under ordinary circumstances and with ordinary preparation--an objective chance to meet the demands of their work. Hence educational reforms cannot remain ideologies; instead, they must supply concrete, specific means for securing some task attention, content coverage, and control over what students do, as well as provide opportunities for practice and testing of student learning.

Westbury (1973) discusses the "open" education movement to drive these points home. This ideology assumes that teachers can create an environment that supports student-initiated learning and that they can select materials that will promote such learning. Consider, for instance, sand and water:

> Sand not only lends itself to all kinds of numerous measurement operations (sifting, pouring, weighing) but provides a rich variety of tactile, aesthetic and conceptual materials as well. Wet sand feels and acts differently than dry sand. Dry sand is good for making pictures and designs; wet sand affords the added possibility of three-dimensional construction. . . . Whole towns and road systems can be constructed, and those in turn may become the subject of mapping exercises as children learn to represent their three-dimensional sand town on a two-dimensional plane. . . . In short, the potential for developing quantitative operations and concepts; artistic ability; notions of city planning; rudimentary principles of architecture, engineering, drafting, and mapping; and symbolic

> representation skills--are all inherent in sand and water. (Bussis & Chittenden, cited in Westbury, 1973, p. 111)

We can concede that children can learn all manner of things messing about with sand and water. What we need to know is how teachers can ensure that most students do things leading to some appropriate (even if unconventional) learning and how teachers can, at the same time, manage diverse and shifting work environments. And, since we must not suppose that teachers are saints and heroes or that children's interests and task involvement will be steady, the prognosis for "open" education is dim, whatever its merits.

If reform ideologies provide no means for subsistence, they will have no power as prescriptions and most people will stick to or revert to the folkways of teaching without being subject to blame. Replacements for the given must somehow pick up the pieces of whatever else tumbles down, and supplements must be structurally fitting to function. Ignoring these requirements is not idealism but lack of seriousness.

The functionality of the folkways is hence one reason for their typicality in teaching. But that typicality--predominance and emblematic in character--supplies another reason, related to how folkways of teaching are acquired and how that affects teacher thinking.

## Are Most Teachers Tadpoles?

Doctors, lawyers, and nurses in training have to count on fundamental discrepancies between commonsense patterns of action and interpretation, individual predilections, and professional ways of seeing and doing things. They find occupational socialization to be a process of coming to see the world in reverse, or of walking through a mirror (Davis, 1968). Through personal experience and social interaction, however, future teachers have

already been apprised of what is fitting in schools. Teaching never quite drops out of the continuity of their lives, and it maintains tight links to the self as a center and to ordinary experience as a source of meaning.[5] Since they are no strangers to classrooms, people aspiring to the profession will experience teaching more as a shelter than as "a field of adventure" (see Schutz, 1971; also Lortie, 1975, on the "continuation theme").

Many American students expect to become teachers like the teachers they have known (not uncommonly their own relatives) and to teach pupils like the ones they went to school with. They typically attend colleges close to their places of birth and prefer to teach in their home states. They may even expect to teach the same content they learned in school--notwithstanding the shifts in values, knowledge, technology, economy, and politics that have taken place over the lifetimes of people still living. Vivid memories of 10,000 hours in classrooms help them determine what they want to be and do in teaching, in the characteristic words of one teacher:

> I remember how I would feel. I remember why I would like someone . . . or why I did not like a teacher. I think just remembering these things can give you a general idea of what you want to do, what you want to be and what you want your children to think of you. (Lortie, 1975, p. 79; see also Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1986)

Being drawn to schools themselves, intending teachers may assume that schooling fits naturally into the lives of students who have an aptitude for learning. This implies that children to whom conventional schooling feels strange will appear to lack promise.

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[5]These conditions are precisely the reverse of what we call an "adventure," which is an experience characterized by discontinuity with everyday life, remoteness from the ordinary self, and an independent intrinsic meaning (see Simmel, 1959).

What Students Know About Teaching

Although varied, people's experiences of schooling are largely compatible with teaching as usual--whose patterns fit the given and are the given. As participants, students are part of the action, experiencing schooling in common with others and absorbing goals, rules, and patterns in the doing. As observers, they can attest to what they see from their vantage point, which depends on what kinds of people they are and what their social role is. But students have neither a real apprenticeship nor a view of teaching beyond their untutored perceptions.

Thus pupils know a teacher when they see one and notice the difference between a good and a bad one. Depending on personal preferences, they favor some teachers over others. They can also tell--though perhaps not in so many words--the difference between friendliness, authority, and tyranny. They "just know" that teacher questions are not, as a rule, honest requests for information which the teacher does not possess but occasions for student drill and practice. Children soon learn how to give some semblance of attention when a teacher talks and understand that they are supposed to do their assignments. They see what different teachers like and how other students respond to reprimands or encouragement. They recognize immediately when they have gone too far and can even predict the teacher's moves in attempting to restore attention and order.

Yet teacher watching ordinarily conveys no sense of technique or of reasons for choosing some content and strategy. Students cannot know the "inner nature" of teaching by acquaintance. The limits of participation interact with the limits of perception:

> They are not privy to the teacher's private intentions and personal reflections on classroom events. Students rarely participate in *selecting goals, making preparations,* or postmortem analysis. . . . It is improbable that many students learn to see teaching in a means-ends frame or that they normally take an analytic stance toward it. . . . What students learn about teaching, then, is intuitive and imitative rather than explicit and analytical. (Lortie, 1975, p. 62)

Internalized and generalized over individuals, imitation converts into habit and tradition. Though personal, intuition is generally bounded by given patterns of action and interpretation and is subject to the strain of consistency. The "apprenticeship of observation"--as a powerful, informal socializing mechanism specific to teaching--therefore promotes conservative, commonsense orientations in teacher thinking.

Effects on Teacher Thinking

This thorough but partial, half-conscious knowledge and lack of discontinuity will not dispose future teachers to think that things may not be what they seem in classrooms. Rather, the folkways they lived with will be taken on faith and activated in experience. The folkways become ready-made recipes for action and interpretation that do not require testing or analysis because they promise familiar, safe results in normal situations. The tendency to see teaching as a largely unproblematic profession is reinforced, in turn, by the basic tenet of common sense that

> some of the most crucial properties of the world are not regarded as concealed beneath a mask of deceptive appearances, things inferred from pale suggestions or riddled out of equivocal signs. They are conceived to be just there, where stones, hands, scoundrels, and erotic triangles are, invisible only to the clever. (Geertz, 1975, p. 22)

Compared to other lines of work, the (felt) information needs of beginners in teaching are, accordingly, low and limited. They concentrate on management and control, as visible aspects of classroom demands novices know by

acquaintance but have not yet handled themselves, and on organizational requirements not visible from a student perspective, such as record keeping and establishing relations with colleagues and parents.

Typical college teaching is unlikely to upset commonsense notions of what teaching is all about, although it does extend the apprenticeship of observation to 13,000 hours. Professional courses for teachers tend to confirm these notions by being either of a commonsense nature themselves ("too easy") or by not being, or seeming to be, about teaching at all ("too theoretical"). On the whole, formal socializing mechanisms in teaching are few and short in duration, not very arduous, and have weak effects. Teachers regard practice teaching as the most valuable part of their preparation (Lortie, 1975). If this induction happens in ordinary schools, it will close a circle that begins and ends with the folkways of teaching. As things stand, opportunities for acquiring teaching expertise in the United States are scarce and they are not institutionalized.[6]

The case of teaching is, therefore, shut for most intending teachers and likely to remain so. To be sure, they will learn more about teaching at the workplace and, for the most part, will develop their private views. But these categories of teaching knowledge tend to arise by the methods and within the confines of the folkways. Expertise, as I have defined it, is as inaccessible

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[6]Current reform proposals in the United States imply (a) an uncritical idea about what teaching expertise is (e.g., mastery of teaching subjects or research knowledge; global or otherwise simplified modes of task-specific cognitive functioning) as well as (b) an uncritical idea of the role and scope of expertise in an occupation such as teaching. (This applies even to the thoughtful Holmes Group, 1986, proposal in its reliance on the scientific study of pedagogy for the doctoral training of teaching professionals.) My current paper focuses on the second point; in future work, I will develop and reconsider the concept of teaching expertise.

to the majority of American teachers as the opportunity to become rich or to climb up the social ladder. A "tadpole theory" will account for most teachers' operating knowledge, for only exceptional individuals, under exceptional circumstances, as

> the more fortunate of the species will . . . shed their tails, distend their mouths and stomachs, hop nimbly on to dry land, and croak addresses to their former friends on the virtues by means of which tadpoles of character and capacity can rise to be frogs. (Tawney, 1964, p. 105; emphasis added)

Most teachers live and die as tadpoles, nothing more.

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